



EDITORIAL

The artist, my memory almost full, time and infinity: when I'm sixty-four

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Grow old! This was the advice given by playwright Nelson Rodrigues to young people, after being asked in a television interview by journalist Otto Lara Resende. It's not a bad advice. Among the alternatives we have, it is certainly the best! And statistically it's easier to hear at this point in our historical time. Life expectancy, in Brazil and worldwide, has more than doubled since the beginning of the last century. We owe this to many factors: technoscientific advances, the impressive productivity gains of the modern economy, in addition to better average conditions of nutrition, housing, basic sanitation and personal hygiene.

But growing old is not a simple task, the hardship of which can be resolved with euphemisms. We have not reached the “best age”. And being potentially so long-lived imposes new demands on the process. We start to deal longer, even with more resources, with the hardships of the body, we face the costs of going through so many generational changes in the space of a lifetime, we work more and for longer and, on the other hand, we can remain longer outside the world from work. In Brazil, in the last ten years, due to the change in the age profile of its population, the economically active population in the age group over 60 has increased by more than 50%. And all this acquires another dimension if we leave the statistical average and consider the profoundly unequal conditions, from a social point of view, in which people face old age.

Aging in modern and contemporary societies offers us yet another challenge, of another order. Paradoxically marked by the primacy of quantitative time over qualitative time, and by the transfer, from the past to the future, of its normative instance – as Henrique Cláudio de Lima Vaz taught us so well –, our *ethos* no longer guarantees, as essential, the values of ancientness and exemplarity of *Phrónimos*. The ability to admire the sage and his trajectory is a virtue to be regained.

We cannot ignore, however, that the perspective of aging has changed a lot in just a few decades. Paul McCartney wrote the delightful song *When I'm Sixty Four* when he was 15, in 1957 (although he recorded it, along with the Beatles, at the age of 25, in 1967). In it, the young composer projected his own old age, in a good-humored way, as a time of incapacities and dependencies: “Will you still need me? / Will you still feed me?”. Well, in 2007, at the age of 65, MacCartney released the vigorous album *Memory almost full*, in clear reference to the 1967 album, in which he plays with this change of perspective, with his own long, difficult, but virtuous road, in addition to consider very carefully the

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vicissitudes of the present time. Now the view is different: “At the end of the end / It’s the start of a Journey / To a much better place”, registers the last track of the album. McCartney is still, now after 80 years old, more active and creative than ever. Aristotle had already taught us that human self-realization is not the work of a lapse of time, but of a lifetime.

When we grow old, we are more vividly aware of the end, but we are invited to reflect more seriously on the meaning of life, on the horizon of its fulfillment, including – and mainly – what transcends time and death. In this concert of life – as imagined by the almost octogenarian Chico Buarque, that brilliant Brazilian writer and composer –, may time, in its time, finally reach glory, and the artist, infinity.